



24-Month STEM OPT Extension

Introduction to STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT)



STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) Extension

The STEM OPT Extension is an additional 24-months of OPT authorized by USCIS in certain STEM eligible fields.

- [STEM Eligible CIP Codes](#)



Qualifying STEM Degree

- The STEM OPT Extension must be based on a Bachelor's, Master's, or Ph.D.
- The degree must be earned from an accredited SEVP certified school and must be in an eligible STEM field as noted on the [STEM Designated Program List](#).
- Note: The thesis requirement or equivalent can be outstanding at the time of application (although this is not an available option when using a previously obtained STEM degree).



STEM OPT based on a previously obtained qualifying STEM degree

A 24-month STEM OPT extension can be based either on:

- The degree that served as the basis for your current period of post-completion OPT; or
- A *previously obtained* STEM degree conferred by an accredited U.S. educational institution as a basis to apply for a STEM OPT extension, even if it was not conferred by the school that is managing the student's current post-completion OPT (CU Boulder)

The previously obtained qualifying STEM degree must meet the following requirements:

- *Conferred* from a U.S. educational institution that is accredited and SEVP-certified (i.e., a student who uses a prior degree cannot take advantage of the "all but thesis or dissertation" exception)
- In a degree program category included on the current [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) at the time of the DSO STEM recommendation.
- Conferred within the 10 years preceding the date the DSO recommends the student for the 24-month STEM OPT Extension.



Additional Eligibility Requirements

- ✓ Maintained lawful F-1 status during the post-completion OPT period.
 - ✓ Report all post-completion OPT employment promptly
 - ✓ Do not accrue more than 90 days of unemployment
- ✓ Have a Qualifying job
 - ✓ Job must be paid, for at least 20 hours a week at each STEM employer
 - ✓ Must relate to the STEM major field of study
- ✓ Have a qualifying STEM employer
 - ✓ Employer must be enrolled in [E-Verify](#) and have an IRS Employer Identification Number (EIN)
 - ✓ There must be a “bona fide employer-employee” relationship
 - ✓ Student may not be self employed
- ✓ Have a completed Form I-983 training plan
 - ✓ Student and employer must complete a Form I-983 Training Plan
 - ✓ Student must submit completed I-983 to their DSO (ISSS advisor) before the DSO recommends STEM OPT in SEVIS



More About STEM OPT Qualifying Job

- The job must be directly related to the degree that qualifies the student for the STEM OPT extension.
- The job must assist the student in reaching his or her training goals
 - “every Training Plan must describe... the relationship between the STEM OPT opportunity and the student’s goals and objectives for work-based learning”
- The STEM OPT opportunity must be more than a "job;" the employer must also provide the training described on the Form I-983 Training Plan.
 - the employer that signs the Form I-983 must be the same entity that provides the practical training experience to the student
- The job must be a paid job
 - The job's compensation and working conditions must be "commensurate with terms and conditions applicable to the employer's similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment.
- Any job undertaken must be for at least 20 hours per week, "excluding time off taken consistent with leave-related policies applicable to the employer’s similarly situated U.S. workers.
- The job must be in the context of a bona-fide employer-employee relationship



STEM OPT start date

- The STEM OPT *authorization* start date must be the date immediately after your post-completion OPT end date.
- Example:
 - Post-completion OPT end date is June 1.
 - STEM OPT authorization start date will be June 2.
- If your STEM OPT *employment* start date is after your STEM OPT *authorization* start date, then you will accrue unemployment days.
- Example:
 - STEM OPT authorization start date is June 2.
 - STEM OPT employment start date is July 2.
 - You will accrue 30 unemployment days for the days between June 2 and July 2.



The background is a collage of design-related images. At the top, a person's hands are seen working on a laptop. Below the laptop, there are various fabric swatches and color charts. On the right side, there are several sheets of paper with architectural drawings and sketches. At the bottom, a person is shown working on a project, possibly a book or a portfolio, with many colorful pages and materials. The overall theme is design and creativity.

Applying for STEM OPT



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Application Timeline

- Your STEM OPT application must be receipted by USCIS:
 - No earlier than 90 days prior to your current post-completion OPT EAD expiration date; *and*
 - No later than your current post-completion OPT EAD end date; *and*
 - Within 60 days of the “School Attestation” signature date on page 1 of the STEM OPT I-20.
- If your current post-completion OPT authorization has already expired, you cannot apply for STEM OPT.
- You **MUST** submit your application to USCIS while you are **inside** of the United States.



Step 1: I-983

Before a DSO may recommend a 24-month STEM OPT extension the student must:

- Complete the [I-983 Training Plan for STEM OPT Students](#) with their employer and obtain signatures from an appropriate individual in the employer's organization;
 - Signatures for the I-983 can be the following: Wet signature (ink), electronic signature using software programs or applications, or an electronically reproduced copy of a signature.

The [Form I-983](#):

- Clearly articulates the STEM OPT student's learning objectives
- Affirms the employer's commitment to helping the student achieve those objectives.

The Form I-983 is not submitted to USCIS with the STEM OPT application, but ISSS uploads it to the student's SEVIS record when recommending STEM OPT.

The STEM OPT Training Plan (Form I-983) Sections 1-2

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

OMB APPROVAL NO. 1653-0054
EXPIRATION DATE: 5/31/2025

TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS

Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training (OPT)

SECTION 1: STUDENT INFORMATION (Completed by Student)

Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):		Student Email Address:	
Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:		Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:	SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix):
Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:		Student SEVIS ID No.:	STEM OPT Requested Period (mm-dd-yyyy): From: To:
Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code:			
Level/Type of Qualifying Degree:			
Date Awarded (mm-dd-yyyy):			
Based on Prior Degree? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Employment Authorization Number:			
SECTION 2: STUDENT CERTIFICATION			
I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.			

DSO Name and Contact Information: Enter the name of an ISSS Advisor, their email address, phone number, and the following address: 2249 Willard Loop Drive Boulder, CO 80309.

- If you are unable to fit all of this information into the space provided, you may hand write it very neatly in black ink.

The CIP code is found on the I-20, it is the six-digit number next to the name of your major.

- Example: 14.1010

Based on Prior Degree – Check NO if using the same degree that was used for your current Post-Completion OPT.

Employment Authorization Number: Enter the number found on your Employment Authorization document (EAD card) underneath “USCIS#”



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Form I-983 Sections 3-4

Start Date of Employment: The date entered here needs to reflect the dates of your *training* with your STEM Extension/E-Verify employer after your post-completion OPT has ended and during the STEM OPT authorization period. In other words, the start date of employment is the date when the student will begin the *STEM OPT training* with the employer.

The Employer Official with Signatory Authority should review the certification and affirm the statement with their signature for sections 3 and 4.

- An appropriate individual in the employer's organization who is familiar with your goals and performance.
- Has signatory authority for the employer.

SECTION 3: EMPLOYER INFORMATION (Completed by Employer)			
Employer Name:		Street Address:	
Employer Website URL:		City:	State: ZIP Code:
Employer ID Number (EIN):	Number of Full-Time Employees in U.S.:	North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code:	
OPT Hours Per Week (must be at least 20 hours/week):	Compensation:		
Start Date of Employment (mm-dd-yyyy):	A. Salary Amount and Frequency:		
	B. Other Compensation (Type and Estimated Amount or Value):		
	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
SECTION 4: EMPLOYER CERTIFICATION			
I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.			
I certify on behalf of the employer that this Training Plan for STEM OPT Students ("Plan") is approved and that:			
1. I have reviewed and understand this Plan, and I will ensure that the supervising Official follows this Plan;			
2. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity regarding any material changes to this Plan, including but not limited to, any change of Employer Identification Number resulting from a corporate restructuring, any reduction in compensation from the amount previously submitted on the Plan that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked, any significant decrease in hours per week that a student engages in a STEM training opportunity, and any decrease in hours below the 20-hours-per-week minimum required under this rule;			
3. Within five business days of the termination or departure of the student during the authorized period of OPT, I will report such termination or departure to the DSO (Note: business days do not include federal holidays or weekend days; and an employer shall consider a student to have departed when the employer knows the student has left the practical training opportunity, or when the student has not reported for practical training for a period of five consecutive business days without the consent of the employer); and			
4. I will adhere to all applicable regulatory provisions that govern this program (see 8 CFR Part 214), which include, but are not limited to, the following:			
a. The student's practical training opportunity is directly related to the STEM degree that qualifies the student for the STEM OPT extension, and the position offered to the student achieves the objectives of his or her participation in this training program;			
b. The student will receive on-site supervision and training, consistent with this Plan, by experienced and knowledgeable staff;			



SECTION 5: TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS (Completed by Student and Employer)	
Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):	
Employer Name:	
EMPLOYER SITE INFORMATION	
Site Name:	Site Address (Street, City, State, ZIP):
Name of Official:	Official's Title:
Official's Email:	Official's Phone Number:
Note: for the remaining fields in this section, employers who already have an internal/pre-existing training plan in place may fill in the details based on that plan.	
Student Role: Describe the student's role with the employer and how that role is directly related to enhancing the student's knowledge obtained through his or her qualifying STEM degree.	
Goals and Objectives: Describe how the assignment(s) with the employer will help the student achieve his or her specific objectives for work-based learning related to his or her STEM degree. The description must both specify the student's goals regarding specific knowledge, skills, or techniques as well as the means by which they will be achieved.	
Employer Oversight: Explain how the employer provides oversight and supervision of individuals filling positions such as that being filled by the named F-1 student. If the employer has a training program or related policy in place that controls such oversight and supervision, please describe.	
Measures and Assessments: Explain how the employer measures and confirms whether individuals filling positions such as that being filled by the named F-1 student are acquiring new knowledge and skills. If the employer has a training program or related policy in place that controls such measures and assessments, please describe.	

Form I-983 Section 5

Enter the name of the appropriate individual in the employer’s organization who is familiar with, and will monitor, your goals and performance. This may or may not be the same Employer Official listed in Section 4.

Site address needs to be the physical address where you will be working while on the STEM OPT Extension.

Please provide detailed information regarding your role, goals and objectives, employer oversight, and measures and assessment.

Page 5 of the I-983 (Evaluations)

- At the time that you submit your STEM OPT Extension I-20 Request to ISSS, page 5 of your I-983 should be left blank.
- This page will be used for your 12-month and 24-month (or final) evaluations. It will be completed by you and your employer later.
- Additional Form I-983 Instructions can be found on the [ISSS STEM OPT Extension webpage](#).
 - Scroll down to the FAQ section titled **Form I-983 Instructions**
 - It is important you carefully review the I-983 instructions, if the Form I-983 has edits needed, it will slow down ISSS's processing time



The STEM OPT Training Plan (Form I-983) Evaluation on Student Progress (page 5)

EVALUATION ON STUDENT PROGRESS

Provide a self-evaluation of your performance, using the measures previously identified, in applying and acquiring new knowledge, skills, and competencies identified in the Training Plan for STEM OPT Students. Discuss accomplishments, successful projects, overall contributions, etc., during this review period. Address whether there are any modifications to the objectives and goals for projects, or new areas for skill and competency development.

Range of Evaluation Dates:	From (mm-dd-yyyy):	To (mm-dd-yyyy):
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Signature of Student: _____

Printed Name of Student: _____ Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____

Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority:_____

Printed Name of Employer Official with Signatory Authority: _____ Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____



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Step 2: STEM OPT I-20 Request

2. Complete the [STEM OPT Extension I-20 Request Form](#) and attach a copy of your:

- Form I-983 Training Plan (completed and signed);
- most recent EAD card; and
- documentation of the completion of your STEM degree course work.
 - If you have completed the degree, attach a copy of your diploma and/or a copy of your final transcript indicating the degree and major.
 - If you have only completed the course work for the degree, attach a signed letter on letterhead from your academic department indicating the degree's major, when the course work was completed, and that the degree is still in progress.

You must first receive the I-20 recommending STEM OPT from ISSS before submitting your I-765 to USCIS.

While ISSS is reviewing STEM OPT I-20 Request

- ISSS will contact you if any questions arise or if any edits are required
 - please carefully review the I-983 instructions to avoid common mistakes and the need for updates
- ISSS will recommend the STEM OPT Extension in SEVIS and upload your completed Form I-983 to SEVIS.
- ISSS will issue you a signed I-20 recommending STEM OPT. You must sign this I-20 by hand and include a copy of it in your application that you submit to USCIS. **You must first receive the I-20 recommending STEM OPT from ISSS *before* submitting your I-765 to USCIS.**
- Please note that ISSS only *recommends* that you receive the 24-month STEM OPT Extension; the final decision is made by USCIS.



What happens if I apply to USCIS first without an ISSS OPT STEM Extension recommendation?

If a student first submits the USCIS online application and *then* requests the STEM OPT recommendation I-20 from ISSS, the STEM OPT application will be **denied**, as the regulations require the recommendation be entered into SEVIS *prior* to the STEM OPT filing.



Submitting Your STEM OPT Application



Step 3: Submit Form I-765 to USCIS

The USCIS Form I-765 is used to request employment authorization and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

The Form I-765 may be submitted online.

Filing electronically

Create or log in to your USCIS online account at myaccount.uscis.gov.

Within your USCIS account, you will be able to:

- Complete the online [Form I-765](#).
- Upload required evidence.
- Pay the [I-765 filing fee](#).

Please note: filing online does not expedite the [USCIS processing times](#).



If you moved in the last 12 months

If you have moved or changed addresses since filing your Post-completion OPT I-765, use the new USCIS Enterprise Change of Address (E-COA tool) to update your address with USCIS.

- Requires a [USCIS online account](#)
- Only available in English

Submit the change of address with USCIS ***before*** initiating a new I-765 form online.



What evidence do I need to submit to USCIS for my online STEM OPT application?

Evidence (as listed in online filing system)	Example	Notes
2 x 2 photo of you	Passport Photo	See “ Photo Requirements ” U.S. Department of State photo requirements. DOS also has a photo check tool that you can use to check the photo ahead of time.
Form I-94	Entry I-94 Or Change of Status I-797 Approval	Download your most recent I-94 here: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/
Employment Authorization Document	Post-completion OPT EAD Card	
Form I-20	Newest I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation	This is only referring to the recommending I-20, not to prior I-20s.
College degree	Diploma and / or transcripts showing degree conferral	
Institution accreditation	Proof of Accreditation (screenshot from school or accreditor's website)	Only required if you are filing STEM OPT based on a prior degree (i.e. not the OPT degree).



Timely Filing Consideration!

- I-765 applications submitted through the USCIS online filing system are often receipted the day *after* the student submits the application.
- To be safe, ISSS recommends you submit your I-765 application no later than **57 days** after receiving the recommending I-20 from ISSS.
- NOTE: USCIS is not open on the weekends or on federal holidays. If your Post-Completion OPT ends on a weekend day or federal holiday, USCIS must receive your application the morning of the weekday before.

Pay.gov Payment Confirmation: USCIS I-765

1 message

ELISdonotreply@uscis.dhs.gov <ELISdonotreply@uscis.dhs.gov>

Tue, Apr 11, 2023 at 9:17 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Your payment has been submitted to Pay.gov and the details are below. If you have a question about this notification or need technical support, please contact us online at <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/contactus> and reference the receipt number(s) shown below.

Application Name: USCIS I-765

Pay.gov Tracking ID: [REDACTED]

Agency Tracking ID: [REDACTED]

Transaction Type: Credit Card

Transaction Amount: \$410.00

Payment Date: Apr 12, 2023

Transaction Date: Apr 12, 2023 03:17:50 AM

Your payment was applied to the following case(s):

[REDACTED]



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Check USCIS Processing Times

- Go to <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>
- Select:
 - I-765 Application for Employment Authorization
 - Based on a request by a qualified F-1 academic student [(c)(3)]
 - Potomac Service Center

Form *

I-765 I Application for Employment Authorization

Form Category *

Based on a request by a qualified F-1 academic student [(c)(3)]

Field Office or Service Center *

Potomac Service Center

Get processing time

Processing time for Application for Employment Authorization (I-765) at Potomac Service Center

80% of cases are completed within

4

Months



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Premium Processing Option for e-filed I-765s

- Online filing of Form I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service, is available for a fee
 - Fees are subject to change
 - Premium Processing fee is *in addition* to the I-765 application fee
- Guarantees some sort of adjudicative action within 30 business days of receipt or USCIS will refund the premium processing fee
 - Does not include time for printing and mailing EAD


Case Was Changed To A Premium
Processing Case

We changed your case, Receipt Number IOE9605064368, from a standard case to a premium-processing case. The premium-processing clock started on April 14, 2023. Your premium-processing receipt notice contains contact information for direct inquiries on your case. Please follow the instructions in the notice. If you move, contact the premium-processing unit directly to update your address.



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Working on STEM OPT

You may continue to work on your expired EAD for post-completion OPT for up to **180 days** while your STEM OPT petition is pending if:

- You properly, and in a timely manner*, filed your application for the 24-month STEM OPT Extension with USCIS.

*Receipt Notice must show a receipt date that is prior to your current post-completion OPT EAD end date.

You can learn more about the 180-extension on the [USCIS website](#).

Waiting for USCIS to approve application

- Pay attention to receipt notices and notifications from USCIS.
 - Make sure your date of birth and name are correct on the receipt notice.
 - **Make sure you receive a paper receipt notice.**
- Contact ISSS if your STEM OPT application is rejected, denied, or if you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE).
- If you move from the U.S. address you provided on the Form I-765 or are no longer receiving mail at that address and have not yet received your EAD Card, login to USCIS online and complete the Enterprise Change of Address (E-COA).
- Be mindful of the 180-day automatic extension.



USCIS Case Inquiries & Status Requests

In addition to the National Customer Service Center phone line, 800-375-5283, USCIS offers several [online tools](#).

- [Check your case status](#) online.
- Get automatic updates about your case.
- Submit an online case inquiry or service request.
- Get a tracking number and register for Informed Delivery through USPS to get previews of the mail in transit.

Case Inquiry

 Case outside normal processing time <i>Think a case is taking longer than expected?</i>	 Did not receive notice by mail <i>Think a notice is lost or missing?</i>	 Did not receive card by mail <i>Think a card is lost or missing?</i>	 Did not receive document by mail <i>Think a document is lost or missing?</i>
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Service Request

 Appointment Accommodations <i>Request accommodations for an interview appointment</i>	 Typographic Error <i>Make typographic corrections for a case</i>	
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EAD: Employment Authorization Document

STEM OPT work authorization is granted in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Dates of employment authorization:
You CANNOT work outside of these
dates.



The background of the image is a blurred photograph of a document with a line graph. The graph has a vertical y-axis and a horizontal x-axis. There are several data points plotted, with some labeled with numbers like '2.5' and '2.47'. A blue pen is visible in the upper right corner, pointing towards the graph. The overall tone is professional and academic.

STEM OPT Reporting Requirements

What is the SEVP Portal?

The SEVP Portal allows students in F-1 status to:

- Update their physical home address
- Update their mailing addresses
- Update their telephone numbers
- Update certain OPT employer information (but students on STEM OPT cannot edit the Employment Start Date)

Please review the [SEVP Help Hub](#) for additional resources (e.g., user guide, instructional videos).



STEM OPT Reporting Requirements

STEM OPT reporting requirements are **different** from Post-completion OPT reporting requirements.

- **General Reporting:**
 - Any changes in legal name, address, phone number → SEVP Portal (student reports).
 - Change in employment → Student must notify ISSS within 10 days of a change.
 - Updates must be first reviewed by ISSS. Please contact ISSS if you have questions.
- **Validation Reporting:**
 - An ISSS DSO will reach out to collect a 6-, 12- and 18-month validation report confirming your name, address, employer name and address, and employment status are correct.
- **Self-Evaluations:**
 - Self-evaluations are submitted to the Designated School Office (DSO) at the 12- and 24-month marks from the start date of the STEM OPT Extension.
 - A concluding self-evaluation occurs at the end of *any* period of STEM employment, regardless of its duration.

For alumni purposes, you can update your address in [Buff Portal](#) and with [Alumni Association](#). Any changes to your name or citizenship should be communicated to [ISSS](#).



Failure to Report

Reporting OPT participation is a requirement of the OPT STEM Extension regulations.

Failure to report in a timely manner will result in the **termination of your F-1 status and subsequently the loss of your OPT work authorization.**



Employer Reporting Requirements

- Evaluation on Student Progress
 - The STEM OPT employer must review the student's annual self-evaluation and sign it to attest to its accuracy.
- Material Changes to an Existing Form I-983
 - Employers must collaborate with the STEM OPT student to report any material changes to the Form I-983 to ISSS at CU Boulder
- Loss of Employment
 - Both the employer and student must notify ISSS at CU Boulder if the student's employment is terminated for any reason before the end of the STEM period.
 - The employer must report this to ISSS no later than five business days after the student's employment terminates
 - Send an email to ISSS with details of the termination



Changing Employers – STEM application is pending

Steps to take if your STEM OPT application is ***pending*** and you change employers:

1. Submit a new Form I-983 to ISSS within 10-days of starting with your new employer
 - Complete the [STEM OPT Information Update Form \(Reporting New STEM OPT Employer\)](#) via DocuSign
2. With 2-5 business days, ISSS will email you an updated I-20 with the new employer information on page 2.
 - Print and sign the I-20
 - log in to the myaccount.uscis.gov account and upload the I-20 to *Unsolicited Evidence* under the Documents tab.
3. If you are already within your STEM OPT period (after your Post-Completion OPT end date), submit a Form I-983 final evaluation for your current employer.
 - The final evaluation (found on page 5) must be completed by you and signed by your supervisor.
 - You only need to submit the final evaluation, not a new Form I-983. Submit if via the Document Submission Form available in [MyISSS portal](#).



Changing Employers – STEM application approved

Steps to take if your STEM OPT application is ***approved*** and your employer changes:

1. Report the end date of your current employer to ISSS
 - Send [ISSS](#) an email.
 - Note: Your current employer is also required to report the termination of your employment to ISSS within 5 business days. They should send [ISSS](#) an email.
2. Complete your Form I-983 **final evaluation**
 - Fill out page 5 of Form I-983 for your current employer
 - Submit this via the Document Submission Form (available in [MyISSS portal](#)).
3. Report your new employment
 - Complete the ISSS [OPT Information Update Form \(name, address, citizenship, and employment\)](#)
 - You will upload a copy of the **new** completed and signed Form I-983 Training Plan for your **new** STEM OPT training opportunity.



Unemployment During STEM OPT

You are allowed up to 150 days of unemployment during the STEM OPT period. This includes remaining unemployment days from your post-completion OPT period.

- Example: If you finish your Post-Completion OPT with 40 days of unemployment time accrued (leaving 50 days remaining), then you would have 110 days of unemployment remaining during your period of STEM OPT.



Documentation to Keep

Suggested Documentation for STEM OPT: you may be asked to provide the following records during or after your STEM OPT authorization:

- Proof that your training is directly related to your major field of study.
- Copies of offer letters or contracts with all STEM OPT employers, including start/ end dates, pay rate, and weekly work hours.
- Job descriptions including job title, duties, location, and supervisor's contact information.
- Copies of pay stubs, bank statements showing direct deposits from your employer(s), and associated W-2 tax forms.



Cap-Gap Extension I-20

Students with a pending or approved cap-subject H-1B petition can stay in F-1 status during the “cap-gap” period, bridging the gap between the end of F-1 status and the start of H-1B status

Eligibility for Cap-Gap Extension:

- a change of status H-1B cap-subject petition was filed with USCIS; and
- USCIS receives the petition before the OPT STEM end date or before the end of the 60-day grace period; and
- the H-1B start date is October 1 of the current year

If the H-1B petition is approved, the F-1 status will be extended through Sept. 30. If the H 1B cap-subject petition was filed during the student’s 60-day grace period, the F-1 status is extended but the student cannot work during the cap-gap period.

The cap-gap extension terminates automatically if the H-1B change of status petition is denied, withdrawn, rejected, or is not selected.

- To request a Cap-Gap I-20, sign in to [MyISSS](#) and complete the **Cap-Gap I-20 Request** under *Training/Employment-Related Forms*.



60-Day Grace Period After STEM OPT Completion

After completing your STEM OPT, you have a 60-day grace period if you maintained your F-1 status and did not exceed your allotted unemployment days.

- You **cannot** work or re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status during this grace period.
- Plan to leave the U.S. on or before the end of your 60-day grace period.
- You may request a SEVIS transfer to another U.S institution if admitted and the new program starts within 5 months.
- You can also apply for a change of status during this grace period.



Beginning a New Degree Program or Completing a SEVIS Transfer While on STEM OPT

- STEM OPT work authorization is **terminated** when your SEVIS record is transferred to a new school and/or you begin a program at another educational level.
- If you choose to enroll in a course of study while participating in STEM OPT, it may impact your work authorization.
 - Consult ISSS if you are considering beginning a new course of study or will seek to [transfer your SEVIS record](#) to another institution.



International Travel on STEM OPT

If you temporarily depart the U.S. while on STEM OPT, you must have **proof of employment**, or a job offer in your major field of study to re-enter the U.S.

- Documents required for re-entry in F-1 status
 - I-20 with STEM OPT employment information on page 2 and travel signature dated within the last 6-months.
 - Valid Passport (must be valid for at least 6 months beyond your intended stay unless you are exempt)
 - Valid F-1 visa (Canadians are exempt)
 - Unexpired Employment Authorization Document (EAD card)
 - As noted on the EAD, the EAD alone is not valid for reentry to U.S.
 - Evidence of a job or job offer in your major field of study and documentation of your employment history.
 - I-901 SEVIS fee receipt (printable online).



Travel on STEM OPT

Travel Considerations During STEM OPT

- **A temporary absence from the U.S. should be less than 5 months.** Absences over 5 months, even with a valid job and EAD, not be considered temporary and you may be denied re-entry.
- **Do NOT leave the U.S. if you have a pending change of status application as it will likely be considered abandoned.** Please consult an immigration attorney if you have questions about this.
- **Do NOT re-enter the U.S. in another status (e.g., B) if you plan to work on STEM OPT.** You must be in F-1 status to be eligible to work on STEM OPT.



Additional Travel Resources

I-94 Arrival Record

- Review your [I-94 arrival record](#) every time you re-enter the U.S. to ensure your entry was properly recorded. Check your biographical information, Class of Admission (F-1), and Admit until Date (D/S).

Travel to Third-Country Destinations

- Depending on your travel route, you may need a transit visa (to pass through another country) or a tourist visa for your final destination. Contact the embassy or consulate of the relevant country for visa requirements. ISSS does not provide advice on visa procedures for other countries.
- [ICE Travel FAQ](#)
- [ISSS OPT Travel FAQ](#)
- [Visa Renewal](#)
- [Printing a Copy of Your I-94](#)



Eligibility for a second period of STEM OPT at a *higher* educational level

- If a student completes all course requirements for another qualifying STEM degree in the U.S. at a *higher* degree level than the first STEM qualifying degree, the student may apply for a second 24-month STEM OPT extension while in a valid period of standard post-completion OPT.
- A student may not be authorized for more than **two** *lifetime* STEM OPT extensions



Additional STEM OPT Resources

- [DHS STEM OPT Hub](#)
- [USCIS OPT Extension for STEM Students](#)
- [I-983 Training Plan for STEM OPT Students](#)
- [Form I-983 Training Plan Resources](#)
- [STEM OPT Reporting Requirements Handout](#)



Applying for STEM OPT can be a complicated process.

If you have questions after reviewing this presentation:

- Email your questions to iss@colorado.edu.
- Speak with an ISSS advisor during in-person or remote [ISSS Advising](#).

